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Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today to participate in a discussion on food aid and its importance throughout the developing world. I appear as a witness along with respected colleagues and partners who have worked tirelessly to expand food aid programs in these critical times. In my testimony today, I will illustrate some important roles U.S. food aid plays saving lives, as well as reducing longer term food insecurity, and some of the challenges we are facing trying to reduce food insecurity. I will also cite examples of innovative programs that can build on food aid to address some of the chronic and long-term issues prevalent in countries that are food insecure.

As an Assistant Administrator at the U.S. Agency for International Development, I oversee the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, DCHA. The Office of Food for Peace is one of nine offices that comprise my bureau. Just recently, Food for Peace celebrated its 50th anniversary. For more than half a century, the United States, through its partners and programs, has provided food aid to billions of people in 150 countries. We are very proud of this accomplishment, and the role we have been able to play in helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

Modern U.S. food aid programming traces its beginnings to post-World War II when, in 1954, President Eisenhower signed the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act, or P.L.480 to share our country's abundant crops with those in need in Europe and other regions. However, food assistance provided by the United States can be tracked as far back as 1812 when President James Madison sent emergency aid to earthquake victims in Venezuela. Early in his administration, President John F. Kennedy underlined the importance of PL 480 to the U.S.- and the rest of the world- by renaming it "Food for Peace" and placing it in the newly created U.S. Agency for International Development. "Food is strength, and food is peace, and food is freedom, and food is a helping to people around the world whose good will and friendship we want," Kennedy said.

Food aid from the United States can be found in many forms and types. In addition to the PL 480 Title I and II programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the Food for Progress and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program. The newest program, the McGovern-Dole program has

already provided assistance to seven million beneficiaries, primarily school children, in its first three years. All U.S. food aid programs provide assistance to a large number of countries with a wide variety of commodities. Fortified vegetable oil when mixed with processed corn soy blend, otherwise known as CSB, provides a wholesome and protein-rich meal for children. Bulk commodities such as grains (sorghum, maize and wheat), and pulses (lentils and beans) are also used.

When you think of all the lives that have been touched by U.S. humanitarian assistance over the years, it is a real testimony to the generosity of the American people. The United States provides half the world's food aid. In 2005 alone, PL 480 programs provided over 3.8 million metric tons of food abroad, including almost half of all contributions to the World Food Program (WFP).

The United States responds to food emergencies by trying to bring the right food to the right people at the right time. This means working to anticipate hunger — as we did this year with the pastoralist crisis in East Africa. It means knowing the people you are trying to help, and making sure that food you provide can and will be used appropriately. And it means knowing who needs the food the most — and recognizing that in times of hunger it is the children, the pregnant and nursing women, and the elderly who need to be found and helped first.

In major emergencies, the United States may provide one third and sometimes up to one-half of the food required by WFP and our non-governmental partners to meet emergency needs. In some cases, however, needs far outstrip other donor's ability or willingness to respond, and we end up providing over 80 percent of all contributions, as we have in Sudan, where we were forced recently to rapidly deploy commodities to minimize ration cuts in Darfur.

Food aid is a valuable tool for saving lives, but food aid alone cannot reverse the destitution and poverty that underlies the vicious cycle of emergencies that has taken hold in the Horn of Africa, and that is threatening the Sahel and Southern Africa. We tend to equate words like "drought" with "famine" — but they are not the same. The existence of famine is closely related to governance and market issues and that is why African leaders through the African Union's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Plan (CAADP) have laid out a plan for breaking the cycle of famine in Africa. This does not mean that we cannot help, and that we don't need to help. We do. Preventing famine will require USAID and donor partners to bring all our development tools to the table, and to coordinate our assistance in the countries in which we work in order to maximize the value of every assistance dollar we provide. But most importantly, we must jointly hold the governments we assist **accountable** for the well being of their people.

As you know, Ambassador Tobias is leading the process of rationalizing U.S. foreign assistance to achieve the goal of "transformational development". I want to share with you a few of the things I saw during visits to the Horn of Africa and Niger, which brought home — to me — the extent of the need for this to occur.

Chronic Need and Failed Governance

As you know, in the Horn of Africa, over the past 3-4 months, we have been facing a large emergency for the third time in six years. I visited the region in April, and even with a robust response on the part of the United States, some needs are not being met. And it is not because we, here in the United States, were not ready.

In early 1995, the USAID Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, a network of trained professionals who use a broad range of advanced food security assessment data, tools, and methods, warned us that recurrent droughts and the lack of sustained recovery and growth investments on the part of the governments in the Horn were leading towards a collapse of the pastoral livelihood.

In the fall of 2005, after another failure of rains heralded a new impending emergency, DCHA's Office of Food for Peace and Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) began to mobilize resources in anticipation of increased needs. And, as we feared, the pastoralists of the Horn of Africa faced an almost complete failure of what we call their "livelihood system" — the livestock-based economy which controls their assets and incomes.

It is the hardest kind of hunger, and I will never get used to it — seeing food in a market place and starving children in a feeding center a stone's throw away. Yes, drought triggered this year's crisis, but it is the failure of livestock markets that is starving pastoralists.

The $92 million in additional assistance, announced by the President in April, recognizes this. And while a portion of these resources will address emergency efforts, such as the provision of food, water, expanded immunizations and nutritional rehabilitation, another portion, provided through FY 2006 International Disaster and Famine Assistance funding for famine prevention and relief is proposed both to address some of the causes for the failure of the pastoralist economy, and to leverage new host-country and other donor investments in order to make that economy viable.

I'd like to shift now from East to West, and ask that you recall the photos in the papers and on the news last summer describing a crisis similar to that in the Horn but located on the western side of Africa in the Sahel. We saw thousands of stick-thin children suffering and in need of assistance. The crisis dominated the news – hunger and starvation in Niger. How could this happen? What could we have done to avoid it? These and many other questions plagued me as I gathered information and examined what we were doing to respond to the crisis.

But with time, and a gathering of evidence, for which USAID has played a major role, most of us in the humanitarian community have come to understand now that the crisis in Niger was not one that hinged on a simple lack of food. It was a nutritional crisis resulting from a combination of chronic factors (poor water quality, improper weaning practices, poor health care, and inadequate sanitation) and market factors which pushed

the price of food out of reach of poor households. It was the very young — infants, and children under five — who were hardest hit, because they just don't have the reserves to fall back on.

What do the next few months hold in store for my bureau? FEWS NET has recently reported some good news for both Niger and the Horn of Africa. Niger and all of West Africa and the Sahel had good harvests last October, and food prices have stabilized in normal ranges. In the Horn, rains have been fairly good in most places, and the immediate suffering has lessened as water and pastures are now adequate in most places. Our food is being distributed to bridge gaps that may appear. We will also continue to support emergency nutrition activities, and stabilize activities in animal health, food security, and livelihoods. FEWS NET and its operational partners have also increased their monitoring resources in both regions to better catch the signals in weather, the markets, and in peoples' behavior that will help us detect an approaching increase in food insecurity before it occurs.

But the fact remains that the margin between acceptable food security and an emergency crisis is exceptionally thin. For the United States, as with other donors, Niger's slide into an emergency situation last year was not expected, and in the time it took for international assistance to "catch up," people suffered. It is a hard way to learn a lesson, but I'm going to make sure we've learned from it. And what I've learned is that in a country like Niger, or Ethiopia, where chronic poverty is so deep, where the nutritional status of children is so fragile, a "humanitarian emergency" is always right there — right underneath day-to-day survival. We won't get to it with emergency assistance. We've got to work with Niger's government and other donors to make sure we get to it with the right long-term investments.

Improving Our Capabilities

For USAID and Title II, we are continuing to better integrate our humanitarian and development resources, and this we are working on not only with our colleagues in USAID's Africa Bureau, but also with our counterparts in international donor community, the African Union, and regional African organizations. It should also be noted that there are other entities throughout the U.S. government, including the Millenium Challenge Corporation and USDA, which are part of the our development assistance effort. We are combining Title II resources with those provided through the President's Initiative to End Hunger in Africa to support an African-led process of rationalizing investments in agriculture and growth — a process that specifically targets "hot spot" countries.

Within my Bureau, DCHA, Food for Peace and OFDA are taking a number of steps to improve how we respond to emergencies that have major food insecurity components.

First, Food for Peace is implementing a new Strategic Plan, approved in 2005 after being developed in close cooperation with PVOs, which seeks to make the best use

of food aid resources. The plan refocuses attention and resources on the most vulnerable groups to help build resiliency so, for example, they will be able to better cope with the next drought or flood in a region, and therefore it should require less emergency food aid than would otherwise be needed. In implementing the plan, we are working to focus resources available for development-oriented multi-year assistance programs on the most vulnerable people in the most food insecure countries so we can have the greatest possible impact and help the neediest people.

To provide us with as much warning of impending crises as possible, we are expanding our early warning system, FEWS NET. We are placing more staff in more countries, personally monitoring and assessing situations, talking to farmers and herders, and visiting markets to determine first hand what the situation is on the ground.

Once we have warning of an impending crisis, to get food quickly to those in need, we are expanding our prepositioning of food aid abroad. In addition to our current prepositioning site in Dubai, which was instrumental in providing food quickly for Darfur, just this month we issued a request for proposals to provide warehouse, cargo handling, and logistics services for commodities at a site on or near the African continent.

But sometimes, despite our best efforts, our food aid cannot make it to those who need it in time to save lives. Whether it is due to a natural disaster or unanticipated conflict or pipeline break, sometimes there is not enough food in our prepositioning sites and no ships nearby to divert. Even with our new efforts, these situations will occur. This is an important reason why, as part of the President's FY 2007 Budget, the Administration requested that the Administrator of USAID be granted authority to use up to 25% of appropriated Title II funds for the local or regional purchase and distribution of food to assist people threatened by a food security crisis.

Food purchased in the U.S. normally takes up to four months to arrive at its destination, and there may be no U.S. commodities available in the area where they are needed. Food purchased locally or regionally, however, can reach beneficiaries within weeks, or less. The ability to use a portion of Title II for local and regional purchase will allow us to move with greater speed and flexibility to save lives and prevent famine.

U.S.-grown food has always played, and will continue to play, the primary role and will be the first choice in meeting global needs. And we plan to use local and regional purchases judiciously where the speed of the arrival of food aid is essential. When lives are at stake, though, we need to have the capability to act. That is why we are asking for your support on this initiative.

Beyond food aid, my bureau is undertaking other innovative steps to deal with food insecurity crises. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA along with its partners is implementing community-based feeding centers (CTC) instead of traditional therapeutic and supplementary feeding centers. This concept allows health care professionals to travel to homes instead of making mothers bring sick children to a center. It also educates community members how to identify malnutrition indicators

early and begin to treat illnesses such as diarrhea with locally available foods thus sustaining the effectiveness of the treatment. More people are reached and children respond better when they are in their homes. Additionally, the CTC model is a more cost effective operation and also helps stop the spread of disease by not grouping sick children together in one place.

The lack of potable water and basic sanitation is problematic not only in the Horn and the Sahel, but also in many food insecure countries in the world. OFDA helps to implement emergency programs to address these two sectors. One example I saw while visiting the town of Koasuui in Kenya was a water tank that can supply the local primary and secondary school with clean water for six months. Other types of programs have helped to repair and build animal troughs and tap stands. Program staffs have also worked to enhance community participation and project sustainability by training water committees, and borehole and pump attendants.

Conclusions

Food aid provides not just food and hope. Yes, bags of food and tins of edible oil can be found in many developing countries. But this food is also a testament of the generosity of the American people and their goodwill to those in need. Food aid will continue to be one of the most visible signs of humanitarian assistance and with it, a beacon to a world of our abundance and generosity to share our good fortune with those less fortunate.

As I have tried to convey, traditional food alone will not solve the problem. We need to make food aid more effective, and integrate it with a wide range of activities to help address the unacceptably high levels of hunger that still ravage the world.

With these last thoughts, I close my remarks and am happy to accept any questions that the Chairman or Committee Members may have for me.